

## PRESS RELEASES: MIDDLETOWN JOINS BUSINESS FIRST!

### Region's Award Winning Business Retention Program Expands

MIDDLETOWN, July 6, 2006 -- *BusinessFirst! For A Greater Dayton Region*, the region's nationally recognized business retention and expansion program, is expanding into the City of Piqua in Miami County and the City of Middletown in Warren/Butler Counties.

From its original launch in 2001, this program has grown from 14 communities in Montgomery County to encompass 44 communities in four counties. The growth of *BusinessFirst!* was recognized in May 2006 by Business Retention and Expansion International (BREI), an international industry organization, which awarded the program its highest honor, the Award of Excellence for an outstanding, multi-county, county or regional program, at its annual conference.

According to Harry Bumgarner, City of Piqua Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director, Piqua chose to enter into the *BusinessFirst!* program because of the high degree of regional collaboration, advanced technology and national recognition. "We like the philosophy behind the *BusinessFirst!* program," stated Bumgarner. "It recognizes, as we do in Piqua, that business retention is an on-going initiative that gives companies a single-point of contact, not just a one-time blitz. Our existing industries are important to Piqua and the region every day of the year."

Bill Murphy, Economic Development Director for Middletown, noted, "I saw-first-hand how effective *BusinessFirst!* was in the Dayton Region, and I thought it was only logical for Middletown to use the same model. Additionally, the kind of regional cooperation that's an integral part of *BusinessFirst!* makes a lot of sense for Middletown."

Like the number of participating communities, the number of service providers participating in *BusinessFirst!* has grown significantly – a point recognized by the BREI award. The *BusinessFirst!* team is a coordinated group of more than 80 economic, community, workforce development and government agencies at the local, county, regional and state levels who are ready to assist firms in meeting their corporate objectives. Using a customer-focused approach, service providers respond to requests for assistance identified during face-to-face meetings between the business owner and the BusinessFirst!

Among the firms assisted in staying and expanding in the region are: IMI Norgren in Brookville in 2001; Smiths Aerospace in the city of Vandalia in 2003; Lord Corporation in Harrison Township in 2005; PK Ware in Miami Township in 2006. BusinessFirst! began in 2001 with funding from the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners and expanded into Miami County in 2003.



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Neyer says the development team will concentrate on 30 acres already owned by the City, but continue to help the City explore other key parcels, potentially more than 450 acres. "It's important to look at the area as one market and to plan it that way, with amenities, landscaping and retailers appropriate to attracting new economy jobs. "We're only limited by our expectations." Neyer estimates development of the first 30 acres could represent a \$33 million investment.

Murphy says in the next few weeks, the City and Al. Neyer team will work out a development agreement that defines the scope and timeline for significant project milestones of early phases. "We expect to get more direction from additional market studies. The plans will no doubt evolve as we go along but we are ready to see construction to begin on the first office buildings early next year. Middletown is ready to step up with a great new community near our Gateway entrance, establishing our rightful place linking the Cincinnati and Dayton regions."



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